

Eyewitness Accounts of Explosions | Twin Towers

In addition to the wealth of video and photographic evidence regarding the destruction of the Twin Towers, there is a wealth of eyewitness accounts. The largest source of eyewitness accounts is the New York Fire Department's (FDNY's) *World Trade Center Task Force Interviews* (sometimes referred to as the "FDNY Oral Histories"), which comprise approximately 10,000 to 12,000 pages of statements by over 500 FDNY personnel collected from early October 2001 to late January 2002.¹

In its final report on the destruction of the Twin Towers, the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) declared that it found "no corroborating evidence for alternative hypotheses suggesting that the WTC towers were brought down by controlled demolition using explosives planted prior to September 11, 2001."² Although it does not elaborate beyond that in its final report, one of the reasons NIST gives in its FAQs is as follows:

*"[T]here was no evidence (collected by NIST or by...the Fire Department of New York) of any blast or explosions in the region below the impact and fire floors as the top building sections began their downward movement upon collapse initiation."*³

This statement ignores and directly contradicts the plethora of accounts from eyewitnesses who reported witnessing explosions, which they consciously identified as such.

The most comprehensive analysis of these accounts, performed by Dr. Graeme MacQueen, a retired professor of Religious Studies at McMaster University, and documented in Chapter 8 of *The 9/11 Toronto Report*, identifies [156 such eyewitnesses](#). The vast majority of them — 135, or 87 percent of the total — are first responders, including 121 from the FDNY and fourteen from the Port Authority Police Department. Thirteen are reporters, and the remaining eight MacQueen categorizes as "other," usually people who worked near WTC 1 and WTC 2.⁴

MacQueen suggests that the main objection to interpreting these accounts as evidence of controlled demolition is that the observed explosions were some other natural form of explosion that occurs in large fires. However, MacQueen identifies three common characteristics among the accounts that distinguish the explosions in WTC 1 and WTC 2 from the four kinds of explosions that typically occur in fires (boiling-liquid-expanding-vapor-explosions or "BLEVEs"; electrical explosions; smoke explosions or "backdrafts"; and combustion explosions):

Identification: *If the explosions encountered were the type typically encountered in fires, the firefighters would be expected to recognize them as such and name them. There are very few instances where they do so. On the contrary, they clearly feel these were different types of explosions than those they were used to encountering...*

Power: *Many eyewitnesses clearly thought they were watching explosions destroy the Twin Towers. But none of the common four types of fire-related explosions could accomplish this...*

Pattern: *...[M]any eyewitnesses reported regular, rapid energetic events in sequence down the building, which cannot be explained by any of the four common types of explosion.*

A selection of the eyewitness accounts illustrating the characteristics outlined above (Identification, Power, and Pattern) is presented in [Appendix A of Beyond Misinformation: What Science Says About the Destruction of World Trade Center Buildings 1, 2, and 7.](#)

The perception that explosions had destroyed WTC 1 and WTC 2 was so prevalent among firefighters that it became widely discussed. “At that point, a debate began to rage because the perception was that the building looked like it had been taken out with charges,” said Christopher Fenyo in his WTC Task Force Interview. John Coyle recalled in his interview, “I thought it was exploding, actually. That’s what I thought for hours afterwards.... Everybody I think at that point still thought these things were blown up.”

In 2007, a group of scientists, an architect, and two 9/11 family members filed a “Request for Correction” to the NIST report under the Information Quality Act.⁵ They argued that NIST had, among other problems, ignored the eyewitness evidence of explosions contained in the World Trade Center Task Force Interviews. NIST responded by saying that it had reviewed them, and, “Taken as a whole, the interviews did not support the contention that explosives played a role in the collapse of the WTC Towers” — a markedly different position from the one given in its FAQs, which said that “There was no evidence (collected by...the Fire Department of New York) of any blast or explosions....”

In any case, MacQueen rejects NIST’s assessment, writing in the paper “118 Witnesses: The Firefighters’ Testimony to Explosions in the Twin Towers”:

“We have 118 witnesses out of a pool of 503. Over 23 percent of our group are explosion witnesses. In my judgment, this is a very high percentage of witnesses, especially when we consider...[that Interviewees] were typically not asked about explosions, and, in most cases, were not even asked about the collapses of the towers. What testimony we have was volunteered, and it therefore represents not the maximum number of witnesses to explosions but the minimum number.”⁶

Endnotes

[1] Fire Department of New York (FDNY): “[World Trade Center Task Force Interviews](#),” *The New York Times* (October 2001 – January 2002).

[2] NIST: *Final Report of the National Construction Safety Team on the Collapses of the World Trade Center Towers* (December 1, 2005), p. 146.

[3] NIST: *Questions and Answers about the NIST WTC Towers Investigation*, Question #8.

[4] A full compilation of the 156 eyewitness accounts identified by Dr. Graeme MacQueen can be viewed at <http://AE911Truth.org/downloads/156eyewitnessaccounts.pdf>.

[5] McIlvaine, Bob et al. “9/11 Family Members and Scholars: Request for Correction Submitted to NIST,” *Journal of 9/11 Studies* (2007).

[6] MacQueen, Graeme: “118 Witnesses: The Firefighters’ Testimony to Explosions in the Twin Towers,” *Journal of 9/11 Studies* (2006).